**Who will tame Donald Trump, the unpredictable showman?**

*By Simon Tisdall, Observer’s Foreign Affairs Commentator*

Michelle Obama’s one-woman boycott of Donald Trump’s presidential inauguration on Monday requires no explanation. It’s plain that the former first lady has zero tolerance and even less love for a man who delights in racist and sexist behaviour. Lots of other people, especially among US allies in Europe, would boycott Trump, too, if they could. Yet, inescapably, they must deal with him for the next four years.

Such fear and loathing is by no means universally shared. A poll, published last week by the European Council on Foreign Relations found that in China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, South Africa, and Brazil, more people welcome Trump’s return than deplore it. In contrast, people in the UK, France, Germany, and a clutch of other west European countries are frankly appalled at the prospect.

That’s why Obama’s nose-holding is an unaffordable luxury for most. Despite the decline in American power and influence, it’s just not practical or workable to “cancel” a US president. And evidently, many leading countries believe Trump #2 could be a good thing for them. Europeans are the odd ones out. If they refuse to play ball, they risk marginalisation and irrelevance.

These findings contradict outgoing president Joe Biden’s bizarre claim to have reinforced American global hegemony. The world is turning its back on what many see as a hypocritical US-supervised international “rules-based” order. Emerging powers believe that Trump’s non-ideological, non-interventionist, nationalistic, transactional, self-serving outlook is better suited to the times. In truth, it reflects their own approach. For them, he’s a necessary agent of change.

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Is this a miscalculation they will come to regret? Charles Kupchan, a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University, suggests that Trump’s foreign policy, lacking firm principles and beliefs, could swing either way, for good or bad, better or worse. The whole ballgame for foreign politicians, diplomats, and lobbyists is to lead him in desirable directions, find ways of working with or around him, and curb his worst instincts.

For Britain, there is a parallel with the former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who tore things down but failed to build back up. “Trump is more demolition man than architect. Instead of helping build a new and better international order, he may well bring down the old one and simply leave the US and the rest of the world standing in the rubble,” Kupchan warns.

These are not mere academic hypotheses. Real lives depend on the redirecting or reining in of Trump – as does, perhaps, the avoidance of global conflict. Much talk in Brussels concerns so-called “Trump whisperers” – people who may have the president’s ear. Italy’s Giorgia Meloni is mentioned. So, too, are Hungary’s Viktor Orbán and NATO chief Mark Rutte. None wields decisive clout. What the world needs now is a “Trump tamer.”

The Ukraine war is a key test of the “good Trump, bad Trump” theory. He criticises the cost of military assistance to Kyiv. He says he understands why Vladimir Putin opposes Ukraine joining NATO. He claims he can end the war quickly, but at the price, apparently, of Ukraine surrendering sovereign territory and rewarding Russian aggression.

On the other hand, Trump knows he cannot afford a damaging repeat of Biden’s disastrous 2021 abandonment of Afghanistan. He dare not give the revamped “axis of evil,” as some describe Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, a watershed strategic victory. Thus, there is talk of him increasing, not reducing, US assistance in the short term, to bolster Kyiv’s negotiating position in future talks.

“Peace through strength” is an objective that Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and European governments are rallying around. And if they act on calls by Poland’s Donald Tusk and France’s Emmanuel Macron to step up collective EU and NATO defence efforts (and spending), there’s a better chance of getting “good Trump” batting for their side as the Ukraine endgame nears.

Trump’s instincts on Israel-Palestine range from poor to terrible. He places deal-making with the Gulf Arab states ahead of peace-making. In office, he treated the Palestinians with contempt, cutting aid and moving the US embassy to disputed Jerusalem. And yet, envious of Barack Obama’s 2009 award and oblivious to irony, he covets a Nobel peace prize. He once promised to deliver the Middle East’s “ultimate deal.” Perhaps he thinks he still can.

Trump does not necessarily buy the Israeli right’s greater Israel agenda – and deplores US involvement in forever wars. Unlike Benjamin Netanyahu, he does not want to fight Iran; indeed, there is talk of talks with Tehran. He would greatly prefer Israel-Saudi normalisation. Guided by skilful diplomacy of the kind that Britain’s Peter Mandelson has been sent to Washington to practise, it’s possible Trump, if handled right, could become a force for good in the Middle East. Right now, it’s a toss-up.

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Trump’s other big international challenge is China. Will he really slap 60% tariffs on Chinese imports? He surely realises how damaging, and inflationary, the ensuing trade war would be. At the same time, he is iffy about defending Taiwan, which Beijing threatens with invasion. Pragmatic, sordid US-China deals are not out of the question. “Good Trump” invited President Xi Jinping to his inauguration. “Bad Trump” scapegoats China for all the world’s woes.

Do or say what they may, Europe’s leaders and other Trump sceptics are ultimately ringside spectators at the greatest political show on Earth. If it all goes to hell, “bad Trump” will win out, retreating further into unilateralism, disengagement overseas, broken alliances, disdain for democracy (at home and abroad), dictator coddling and the antagonistic trolling by stooge Elon Musk of old friends in Germany, Canada, and the UK.

If that happens, it’s unclear what anyone can really do about it. Who will tame Trump? An answer is urgently required. But don’t ask Michelle Obama. She’s out of here.

**重要单词及详细解析**

**1. boycott /ˈbɔɪ.kɒt/ (v. n.)**

**意思**：抵制，拒绝参与

**同义词**：ban, embargo, shun, prohibit

**反义词**：support, endorse, promote

***例句****：Many people decided to boycott the event due to its unfair policies.*

**记忆方法**：可以联想“boy”抵制某个产品或活动，表示强烈反对。

**2. inauguration /ɪˌnɔː.ɡjʊˈreɪ.ʃən/ (n.)**

**意思**：就职典礼，开始

**同义词**：commencement, opening, initiation

**反义词**：termination, conclusion, closure

***例句****：The president’s inauguration ceremony was attended by thousands.*

**记忆方法**：来源于 *inaugurate*，意味着“正式开始”。

**3. loathe /ləʊð/ (v.)**

**意思**：憎恶，讨厌

**同义词**：detest, abhor, despise, hate

**反义词**：admire, adore, cherish, love

***例句****：She loathes dishonesty in politics and refuses to tolerate it.*

**记忆方法**：发音类似“low”，可以想象遇到不喜欢的事情时心情低落。

**4. deplore /dɪˈplɔːr/ (v.)**

**意思**：谴责，强烈反对

**同义词**：condemn, denounce, lament, criticize

**反义词**：approve, commend, praise, endorse

***例句****：The United Nations deplores the continued violence in the region.*

**记忆方法**：和 *explore*（探索）相反，*deplore* 指发现后表示谴责。

**5. marginalisation /ˌmɑː.dʒɪ.nə.laɪˈzeɪ.ʃən/ (n.)**

**意思**：边缘化，使……不重要

**同义词**：exclusion, alienation, neglect

**反义词**：inclusion, acceptance, recognition

***例句****：The new policy led to the marginalisation of smaller businesses.*

**记忆方法**：来自 *margin*（边缘），表示某事被推向边缘。

**6. hypocritical /ˌhɪp.əˈkrɪt.ɪ.kəl/ (adj.)**

**意思**：伪善的，虚伪的

**同义词**：insincere, deceptive, double-faced

**反义词**：honest, sincere, genuine

***例句****：His hypocritical attitude made people doubt his real intentions.*

**记忆方法**：*hypo-*（低于、假的）+ *critical*（批判），形容表里不一。

**7. hegemony /hɪˈɡem.ə.ni/ (n.)**

**意思**：霸权，主导权

**同义词**：dominance, supremacy, control

**反义词**：weakness, submission, subordination

***例句****：The country maintained its economic hegemony in the region.*

**记忆方法**：来源于希腊语 *hegemon*（领导者）。

**8. transactional /trænˈzæk.ʃən.əl/ (adj.)**

**意思**：交易型的，短期合作的

**同义词**：commercial, business-oriented, deal-making

**反义词**：relational, cooperative, long-term

***例句****：His relationships with others were purely transactional, based on personal gain.*

**记忆方法**：来自 *transaction*（交易），表示以交易为主。

**9. self-serving /ˌselfˈsɜː.vɪŋ/ (adj.)**

**意思**：自私自利的

**同义词**：egotistical, self-centered, manipulative

**反义词**：altruistic, selfless, generous

***例句****：The politician’s self-serving actions damaged his credibility.*

**记忆方法**：*self*（自己）+ *serving*（服务），即只为自己服务。

**10. instincts /ˈɪn.stɪŋkts/ (n.)**

**意思**：本能，直觉

**同义词**：intuition, gut feeling, impulse

**反义词**：rationality, reason, logic

***例句****：His political instincts helped him make quick decisions.*

**记忆方法**：和 *instinctive*（本能的）相关。

**重要短语搭配**

**hold one’s nose**

**意思**：忍受，不情愿接受

***例句****：Many voters held their noses and supported the candidate despite their reservations.*

**play ball**

**意思**：合作，配合

***例句****：The company refused to play ball with the government on new regulations.*

**swing either way**

**意思**：可能朝任何方向发展

***例句****：The decision could swing either way depending on the final vote.*

**stand in the rubble**

**意思**：站在废墟之中（比喻混乱或失败）

***例句****：After the war, the country was left standing in the rubble.*

**scapegoat someone**

**意思**：让某人成为替罪羊

***例句****：The manager was made a scapegoat for the company’s financial crisis.*

**whisper in someone’s ear**

**意思**：私下影响某人

***例句****：The adviser was known for whispering in the president’s ear.*

**peace through strength**

**意思**：以实力求和平

***例句****：His strategy was based on peace through strength.*

**tight-lipped about**

**意思**：对……闭口不谈

***例句****：The officials remained tight-lipped about the details of the agreement.*

**重点句子解析**

**Emerging powers believe that Trump’s non-ideological, non-interventionist, nationalistic, transactional, self-serving outlook is better suited to the times.**

关键词：*emerging powers*（新兴大国），*non-interventionist*（不干涉主义的），*transactional*（交易型的）

翻译：新兴大国认为，特朗普这种非意识形态、不干涉主义、民族主义、交易型和自私自利的观点更适应当今时代。

**Real lives depend on the redirecting or reining in of Trump – as does, perhaps, the avoidance of global conflict.**

关键词：*redirecting*（重新引导），*reining in*（控制，约束），*avoidance*（避免）

翻译：人们的生命安全取决于是否能引导或约束特朗普，也可能影响全球冲突是否能被避免。

**If it all goes to hell, ‘bad Trump’ will win out, retreating further into unilateralism, disengagement overseas, broken alliances, disdain for democracy, and dictator coddling.**

关键词：*win out*（最终胜出），*retreat into*（退回到），*disdain*（轻蔑），*dictator coddling*（讨好独裁者）

翻译：如果一切崩溃，那么“坏特朗普”将占上风，导致单边主义加剧、国际事务退出、联盟破裂、蔑视民主，并讨好独裁者。